THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Office of the Director

3 April 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, National Security Agency

SUBJECT: COINS Experiment

REFERENCE: NSA Memorandum, Same Subject,
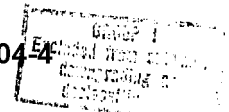Serial N0192, 2 March 1970

1. The Director of Central Intelligence has requested me to respond directly to your memorandum of 2 March 1970. Your memorandum recommends that the current test and analysis phase of COINS be extended for two years and that four supplementary recommendations be approved for implementation. It is evident that COINS has reached a stage in its development at which recommendations for a future course of action are appropriate.

2. It is agreed that the date of 1 April 1970 is unrealistic for the beginning of a formal evaluation of COINS. An additional test and analysis period of two years, presumably FY 71 and FY 72, will permit the Community to program COINS through FY 72.

3. COINS has demonstrated the feasibility of a Community on-line system, and your efforts on behalf of the Community to achieve this, despite the many problems involved, are appreciated. However, a thorough evaluation of the utility of COINS should be completed as soon as possible--hopefully in less than two years. Also, agreement on a two year extension to permit appropriate programming and budgeting should in no way be understood as an endorsement of COINS in its present configuration. All possible alternatives should be examined thoroughly before any decisions are made as to the nature of an operational information exchange system for the Community.

4. With reference to your supplementary recommendations, it is clear that there are a great number of technical and procedural problems which all of the participating agencies must address, and they continue to be urged to do so. Both CIA and NPIC are working to develop procedures for greater participation in COINS, and the Security Committee is working on the attendant security problems. Your assurance that NSA, as a COINS participant, will complete its share of the recommended tasks is appreciated.

5. Budgeting for the expenses of a Community system such as COINS is a difficult problem. Your recommendations on how to handle this during the coming years would be most welcome.

6. The development of files has been a constant problem due, largely, to the experimental/operational character of this initial effort. Since the technical problems of this type of system appear to be solvable and, as you suggest, utility is becoming an increasingly important issue, files should be selected most carefully to meet the operational needs of users. The IHC will work with you to the extent that you desire in your efforts to evaluate current COINS files, and will undertake to determine from IHC members their requirements for additional files.
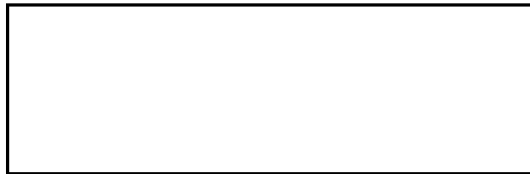
7. Identifying appropriate users for a Community system and providing proper training for them is difficult and should be given priority consideration. This training should emphasize the nature of the intelligence contained in COINS as well as the techniques of retrieving the information. A reduction in the complexity of the requirements for analyst understanding and operation of the system would be very helpful in easing the training burden.

8. The Director always receives with interest your views on all aspects of the COINS experiment. Though progress to date has been slow measured against preliminary plans, the reasons for this are known and understood. We must, in the near future, reach some

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agreement on a configuration for an operational system to serve the Community. Such a system must be designed with minimum possible complexity, must respond to real needs in order to ensure utility, and must be economical in terms of resources required.

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